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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 002124

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TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: WEST BANK LAND CONFISCATION TAKES ONE STEP CLOSER
TO E-1 DEVELOPMENT

REF: A. JERUSALEM 01840 (ABU DIS)
[1](#)B. JERUSALEM 1840 (AL-'AZARIYA)
[1](#)C. JERUSALEM 02060 (MA'ALE ADUMIM AND E-1)
[1](#)D. JERUSALEM 02032 (E-1 SEPTEMBER UPDATE)

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Ha'aretz reported October 9 that the GoI confiscated more than 1,100 dunums of Palestinian land to build a road for Palestinians to travel between Abu Dis and Jericho without traversing the E-1 area. PA President Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and PLO Chief Negotiator Sa'eb Erekat issued statements condemning Israeli actions that they describe as "destructive to all the efforts...to realize a two-state solution by having a viable, contiguous Palestinian state." Abu Dis Mayor Jaffal and Ministry of Religious Affairs Assistant Secretary Zuhayka said they would seek legal ways of recovering the confiscated land. The confiscation and road development appear to support Israeli efforts to develop the E-1 area and connect the Ma'ale Adumim settlement bloc to Jerusalem, effectively cutting the West Bank in half. End Summary.

LAND EXPROPRIATED BY GOI FOR PALESTINIAN ROAD

[1](#)2. (U) Ha'aretz newspaper reported October 9 that the GoI issued orders on September 24 to expropriate Palestinian-owned land near the West Bank settlement of Ma'ale Adumim. According to Ha'aretz, the land being confiscated is slated to be used to construct a new road connecting Palestinian villages east of Jerusalem with Jericho. The route of the new road would run from Abu Dis around the southern end of the Ma'ale Adumim settlement bloc, connecting to Route 1 east of the bloc beyond the planned route of the security barrier and then on to Jericho.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The IDF ordered the confiscation of 1,128 dunums (approximately 280 acres) plus 800 square meters. This land is in the villages of Abu Dis and Sawahirah, which are between Jerusalem and Ma'ale Adumim; Nabi Musa, a Muslim holy site south of Jericho; and al-Khan al-Ahmar, near the Mishor Adumim industrial complex.

PALESTINIANS PROTEST CONFISCATION,
PURSUE LEGAL OPTIONS

[1](#)4. (U) PA President Mahmud Abbas (Abu Mazen) issued an October 10 statement condemning the GoI's decision and urging the USG to prevent the confiscation. In a separate statement the same day, PLO Chief Negotiator Sa'eb Erekat called the confiscation "destructive to all the efforts led by the international community...to realize the two-state solution by having a viable contiguous Palestinian state." Erekat

said building a separate road for Palestinians
"facilitates...the isolation of Palestinian East Jerusalem
from the rest of the West Bank.... Such unilateral Israeli
measures demonstrate yet again Israeli intentions to
consolidate and expand Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem,
and effectively take Jerusalem off the negotiating table."
Both Abbas and Erekat raised this issue in meetings with
Assistant Secretary Welch and the Consul General on October
11. Abbas expressed great concern about these Israeli steps
and sought USG efforts with the GoI to reverse the land
confiscations.

15. (C) Mayor of Abu Dis Ibrahim Jaffal told PolOff October 9
that the municipality owns the Abu Dis land that is being
confiscated and that he is looking into legal options to
prevent the action. According to Jaffal, the al-Khan
al-Ahmar land belongs to individuals, not to a village, and
he does not know what legal action they may consider.
Assistant Secretary of the Palestinian Authority Ministry of
Religious Affairs Salah Zuhayka told PolOff that the Ministry
owns the land at Nabi Musa and intends to go to court to try
to keep it.

COMMENT: ROUTE OF THE NEW ROAD
LEAVES E-1 OPEN TO DEVELOPMENT

16. (C) Comment: Currently, Route 1, which separate E-1 and
Ma'ale Adumim, is the only east/west corridor between
Jerusalem and Jericho. The land being confiscated for the
new road is south of Ma'ale Adumim and the planned route of
the separation barrier. According to an IDF-issued map, a
Palestinian traveler from a village east of Jerusalem would
travel on the new road around Ma'ale Adumim (to the south)

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and connect to Route 1 east of the Ma'ale Adumim settlement
bloc. (ConGen will make the IDF-issued map available to
NEA/IPA.) While the new road would allow "transportation
contiguity" between Abu Dis and Jericho, it is not clear that
Israeli plans would allow Palestinians to travel between the
northern and southern parts of the West Bank without a long
detour around the Ma'ale Adumim bloc.

17. (C) The new road will permit the GoI to eliminate
Palestinian access to Route 1 near E-1 and Ma'ale Adumim.
This step would facilitate the potential development of E-1
and connect Ma'ale Adumim to Jerusalem with an uninterrupted
string of Israeli settlements. Land confiscations for the
separation barrier around Ma'ale Adumim and E-1 and the
development of the road system in E-1 (see Refs A-C) suggest
the recent confiscations are part of a larger Israeli plan to
ensure that the entire area within the planned route of the
separation barrier around the Ma'ale Adumim settlement bloc
is permanently tied to Jerusalem, effectively cutting the
West Bank in half. End Comment.

WALLES